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Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5834th meeting

Tuesday, 12 February 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Lewis-Navarro	(Panama)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Michel
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Kouchner
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Craxi
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757)

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08-23611 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Opening remarks

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before proceeding with the approval of the agenda, I would like to express the honour that I feel to preside over this meeting on the sixth anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, dealing with the participation of children in armed conflicts.

I wish to highlight the presence of distinguished guests, particularly the Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, Mr. Charles Michel, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Vittorio Craxi. In addition, I offer special acknowledgement to Permanent Representative of France, Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert, for the excellent work that he has done chairing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Guinea, Iceland, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

It is so decided.

Also, in accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

It is so decided.

Also, in accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Jo Becker, Representative of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

It is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 7 February 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2008/88, and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held on Tuesday, 12 February 2008, regarding children and armed conflict".

I propose, with the consent of the Council to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2007/757, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

I shall now give the floor to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: Mr. President, I thank you for convening this open debate of the Security Council at the ministerial level, a meeting devoted to taking action to ensure the protection of children exposed to armed conflict. The level of the debate and your presence here today, Mr. President, testifies to your strong commitment on this critical issue.

I am grateful to the Security Council, its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and particularly the leadership that France has been providing in the Working Group on the agenda for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

It is with hope tempered by caution that I present to the Council this report of great significance. The seventh annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict reviews developments in 18 situations of concern, recording systematically the following six grave violations: killing or maiming of children, recruiting or using child soldiers, attacks against schools and hospitals, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, the abduction of children, and the denial of humanitarian access to children. Altogether, 58 offending parties have been specifically named and listed; they are drawn from 13 situations of concern. All 58 offending parties are responsible for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. In addition, many of them are also responsible for committing other grave abuses, as recorded in the lists.

I am pleased to state that this report has been a United Nations system-wide collaborative effort. I would also like to stress that the hallmark of the monitoring and reporting exercise, as well as of this annual reporting to the Security Council, has been a constructive dialogue at all levels with the Member States concerned for the benefit of the war-affected children.

Over the past year, much has been accomplished on this ambitious agenda for children. The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has met on six occasions, and there have been positive developments as a result of its recommendations and actions. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after an initial delay, the Government brought to trial former Mai-Mai Commander Kyungu Mutanga, also known as Gédéon, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the recruitment of 300 children in Katanga Province from 2003 to 2006. That action followed strong recommendations by the Working Group to take appropriate legal measures against members of armed groups accused of grave crimes against children. This marks a turning point which shows us that through our collective efforts we can transform protective standards into compliance and mere condemnation into accountability.

Important precedents have also been set to end impunity for crimes against children. We look forward to the trial proceedings by the International Criminal Court for militia leader Thomas Lubanga, who is facing charges of having recruited child soldiers in the north-eastern Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; similar indictments are in place for two other Ituri militia leaders. The trial of former head of State Charles Taylor of Liberia by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the sentencing by the Special Court of three members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Civil Defence Forces militia for the recruitment and use of child soldiers — all of that sends an important message that such crimes against children will not be tolerated and that those who engage in such practices will be brought to justice.

We are also increasingly witnessing the implementation of key commitments by parties through action plans, and that in turn is beginning to yield concrete results in terms of protection for children on the ground. A noteworthy achievement has been realized with the parties to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, where, for the first time, we have had a de-listing of parties from the annexes. The Forces nouvelles and four armed militias have successfully implemented their action plans and have ceased all recruitment of children, and that continues to be

verified by the United Nations country team — hence their de-listing.

The dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire has resulted in the release of approximately 3,000 children to UNICEF and child protection agencies. That success should reinforce the resolve of the Council, as its engagement is making a real difference in the lives of these children. Progress on action plans to end the recruitment of children by armed forces and groups has also been made in the Central African Republic, Myanmar, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Chad. I am also pleased to note that the Government of Colombia has agreed to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and I look forward to working closely with that Government.

In spite of the impressive progress, I regret to report that the overall situation of children affected by conflict remains grave and entirely unacceptable. There are still many challenges, and my Office, along with fellow partners — especially UNICEF, peacekeeping operations and political missions — continues the important work begun by the Council, by enhancing our collective efforts for the protection of children affected by conflict. Indeed, although I am addressing the Council, the protection of children is an issue that necessitates concerted efforts by all Member States. I am happy to see the presence of the representatives of many Member States in this Chamber today, and I thank them for their commitment on this issue.

It is also imperative to note that, in certain situations of concern, the inability of the United Nations monitoring and reporting regime to engage in dialogue with non-State actors has impeded progress on securing the release and rehabilitation of children associated with such groups. I urge the Council to call on relevant Member States to facilitate dialogue with non-State armed groups for the purpose of developing action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children and to address all other grave violations and abuses committed against children.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Council to several urgent challenges that will require our close examination as a basis for continued global efforts for war-affected children. In order to achieve the protection of children affected by conflict, we need to expand our recognition of the changing characteristics of conflict. Today there are grey zones of conflict that blur traditional lines between armed conflict and criminal violence, often involving transnational crime, non-traditional warfare and trafficking. Terrorism and counter-terrorism measures pose their own special problems for the protection of children today, as we have witnessed recently in Baghdad. The use of suicide bombing is entirely unacceptable; nothing can justify it. We have witnessed child victims at both ends of such acts: children have been used as suicide bombers in certain instances, while many children have been killed by suicide bombings. Counter-terrorism strategies also cause concern as we move away from police methods to large-scale military action, with collateral damage that sometimes includes the killing and maiming of children.

Systematic and deliberate attacks on schoolchildren, teachers and school buildings have escalated in certain situations. In Afghanistan, such attacks are targeted against girls' schools in an effort to intimidate and to prevent girls from gaining access to education. This seems to follow a particular pattern and to contain an ideological dimension that is disturbing. We urge that measures be taken to secure schools as zones of peace, through commitments by parties to ensure the child's right to education.

In regional conflicts, such as those in the Great Lakes and Horn regions of Africa, the cross-border recruitment of children from camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees is surging. Research shows us that security in camps is one of the major factors in the recruitment of children: the greater the security, the less the recruitment. This has important implications for humanitarian agencies running refugee and IDP camps as well as for our peacekeeping operations. The cross-border movement of child soldiers and their recruiters is also posing a great many problems for agencies working with these extremely vulnerable populations.

The detention of children for alleged association with armed groups, in violation of international standards, is increasingly worrisome. Many detained children are subjected to ill treatment, torture and forceful interrogation methods and are deprived of food and education. These children also lack recourse to prompt and appropriate legal assistance and usually are not separated from adults.

The use of indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster munitions, during attacks in areas of civilian concentration has a severe impact on those populations, especially children, even long after the conflict may have ended. I am heartened to learn that a major international conference on a binding international instrument prohibiting cluster munitions will take place this spring in Dublin.

Sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, against children is a devastating consequence of conflict in many parts of the world. Sexual violence against children by State and non-State parties to conflict is prohibited by international law. We have received information that in the Great Lakes region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, there are appalling levels of sexual and gender-based violence. Impunity for such acts is widespread. It is imperative that the perpetrators of acts of rape and other kinds of sexual violence, which have a long-term, devastating impact on the victims, be prosecuted in accordance with the gravity of such crimes. Like the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence is always deliberate, targeted and a direct consequence of criminal intent. We cannot tolerate such action in any context, but when it involves children it is especially abhorrent.

The recruitment and use of child soldiers has been the main concern of the Council and the gateway to the lists annexed to the annual reports of the Secretary-General to date. We feel this was a great step forward for the Council; the parties that continue to engage in this serious crime must be put on notice that targeted measures will be undertaken against persistent violators. However, there are five other grave violations, and child victims of those grave violations and abuses deserve the attention and protection of the international community. It is our belief that the gateway to the annexed list of parties should include all the grave violations.

Nonetheless, for the reasons I have mentioned, the Council may wish to take an incremental approach and initially consider systematic sexual violence against children as an additional gateway to the annexes. In this respect, the inclusion of grave sexual violence would represent an important step in the monitoring process, particularly in terms of holding violators accountable for this egregious crime against children.

It is now time that the Security Council move from words towards effective action. There are 16 persistent violators who have been on the annexed lists for five years in a row. Although certain parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Sri Lanka and Myanmar are making efforts, several others remain in contempt of the Council and its resolutions. The Council has already, on previous occasions, expressed its intention to take concrete and targeted measures against those parties. It is most important that the Council make good on its promise in order to ensure the credibility of this exercise.

The targeted measures could include the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, the imposition of arms embargoes, a ban on military assistance and restrictions on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned. I urge the Council to begin to set up a mechanism to review and oversee the imposition of targeted measures against these violators to end the trend towards impunity in all situations.

The Security Council is playing a historic role when it deals with this theme and this mandate. In recognizing that the protection of children in armed conflict is an important peace and security issue which requires effective and decisive action, the Council has moved the agenda forward, understanding that there can never be peace in the world unless we take care of our children. One of the hallmarks of this agenda has been that, at the most critical moments, the imperative to protect children has overridden political considerations. The Council and its Working Group are encouraged to continue to give high priority to children above all else.

No one who has looked into the eyes of a child soldier can be at peace unless we rid this world of this scourge. No one who has held the hand of a young girl who has suffered multiple rapes can ever forget the duty to work for the protection of the vulnerable.

I would like to thank the Council and my fellow partners for taking this historic journey together, towards peace and justice for children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Veneman: I am very pleased to join the Council today as it turns its attention once again to the situation of children affected by armed conflict. UNICEF welcomes the Security Council's ongoing concern with grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

I commend my colleague, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her work in helping to draw global attention to the impact on children in situations of armed conflict.

It is fitting that we gather today on the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. States which have not done so should be urged to sign, ratify and fully implement the Optional Protocol.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) helps highlight the harsh reality of what children undergo in countries affected by armed conflict. Children continue to suffer from the horrors of war. Children often cope with trauma, violence and the loss of family, homes and community, and many have been killed or maimed even long after conflict has come to an end. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, children are all too often victims of indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster munitions. Children must be protected from the effects of these and other indiscriminate weapons.

Children also suffer from the indirect impact of war through resurgence in preventable diseases such as malaria, measles, diarrhoea and respiratory infections. Recent data show that conflict and post-conflict countries have some of the highest rates of under-5 mortality. Conflict and strife often break down public health services and contribute to food insecurity, population displacement and continued insecurity. Rehabilitation of key services and infrastructure requires security and political stability.

An essential part of re-establishing normalcy for children affected by conflict is to ensure that they have access to schools. When entire communities are in a state of upheaval, schools can provide a safe haven and a sense of normalcy. It is therefore vital that their sanctity be protected. In Afghanistan, as noted in the report, schools have been deliberately targeted in the ongoing hostilities. The misuse or occupation of schools, or attacks against them, are some of the worst violations against children in situations of armed conflict. They are also a violation of one of the most basic principles of the laws of war: that civilian sites must be protected.

UNICEF has a long history of advocating, and assisting in, the release and reintegration of children used by armed forces and groups. We know from experience that it is possible to reintegrate these children, especially when they are provided with assistance and the skills they need to become positive and productive members of society. Yet reintegration is a difficult and long-term process requiring patience and long-term commitment.

Throughout the past several years, UNICEF country offices have worked with States and non-State actors that have recruited and used children, in order to bring an end to this abhorrent practice. The report of the Secretary-General references UNICEF's engagement in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan.

The 2007 Paris commitments help to reinforce international consensus on the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. These commitments also reiterate measures that States can take to protect children involved in hostilities and help reintegrate them into their families and communities. States should be urged to endorse the Paris commitments.

As mentioned by my colleague Ms. Coomaraswamy, girls and women in conflict situations are extremely vulnerable because of sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces and groups and, at times, even by the very people entrusted with providing their protection. Sexual violence is so often used as a weapon of war; there must be greater focus and attention on this issue. Allow me to share one story, as told by a 14-year-old girl in Liberia. She said:

> "The attackers tied me up and raped me because I was fighting. About five of them did the same thing to me until one of their commanders who knew my father came and stopped them, but also took me to make me his wife. I accepted him because of fear".

We need to put an end to the abuse, the rapes and the sexual violence.

UNICEF welcomes the efforts of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed

Conflict. In a relatively short period of time, the monitoring and reporting mechanism has produced positive results for children on the ground by focusing on grave violations in six categories, as stated earlier by my colleague.

More must be done to better monitor, prevent and respond to these violations. It is critical that the best interests of the child be the guiding principle of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, rising above all other considerations.

The purpose of the mechanism is to monitor, report and respond to the situation of child victims of conflict in order to reduce the occurrence of grave violations against children, enhance the accountability of perpetrators and prevent further grave violations in situations of armed conflict.

Children continue to bear the brunt of conflict, but they also demonstrate resilience and capacity to overcome the violence around them. Their energy and strong desire to end conflict can be a catalyst for peacebuilding within their own communities. We have heard some of those young voices in a compilation of stories and recommendations from conflict zones, titled "Will you listen?". The compilation was launched last year on 17 October as a supplement to the 10-year Graça Machel strategic review, which was submitted to the General Assembly. Many of those children and youth spoke of the important role they play in providing change and of the need to act swiftly. As a young woman from Colombia said, "We are the future and people should be aware of that. Right now, we are inheriting a very unstable world".

Let us keep those words in mind as we move forward with a shared sense of urgency in helping to build a better and safer world for our children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Ms. Jo Becker, representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Becker: I would like to thank the presidency and the members of the Security Council for giving non-governmental organizations (NGOs) the opportunity to participate in this important forum. It is an honour to be here.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, an international network of NGOs including grassroots civil society groups as well as some of the largest humanitarian and human rights organizations in the world. Many of our colleagues are witnessing war every day and struggling to protect children from the constant threat of violence.

Today's open debate provides an important opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved by the Security Council in strengthening protections for children. We welcome the Council's achievements — the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the development of action plans to end the use of child soldiers, and the very important efforts of the innovative Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

However, we are not here to celebrate. As members know, in many ways children in armed conflicts today are no better off than their peers were years ago. Impunity for those who brutally attack them is too often the norm. Today, it is as important as ever that all of members of the Council stay focused on the purpose of their work and redouble their efforts to make real change for children.

We urge the Security Council to take several critical steps without delay. Those steps reflect the 12 recommendations set out by the Secretary-General in his latest report on children and armed conflict. First, the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be strengthened and its scope expanded. Secondly, strong and consistent action must be taken against perpetrators that repeatedly violate the rights of children. Thirdly, accountability must be demanded from perpetrators by imposing targeted measures when warranted. Finally, the full range of actions in the Working Group's toolkit in response to continuing violations must be utilized.

It has now been over two years since resolution 1612 (2005) set the groundbreaking monitoring and reporting mechanism into motion. While the mechanism is still in its infancy, a recent Watchlist field-based study found that the mechanism has made impressive strides in the quest to collect timely, accurate and objective information. Our study also identified obstacles and challenges, including the need for greater collaboration with other existing networks, stronger support for the participation of civil society groups, better efforts to protect the safety of survivors and others who provide information, and more effective responses to violations. To address those, we have provided practical recommendations to the United Nations and its partners, which should be swiftly implemented.

Fundamentally, the Security Council must also address the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Currently, the mechanism is triggered only by violations involving the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and is automatically applied only to the situations on the Council's formal agenda. It should be automatically applied to all situations of armed conflict in which children's security and rights are violated by armed forces and groups.

As recommended by the Secretary-General, we also urge the Council to give equal consideration to all six grave violations against children so that any of those violations could trigger the application of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the listing of a party in the Secretary-General's annexes. At the same time, we recognize that an incremental and pragmatic approach has contributed to the success of the children and armed conflict agenda. For that reason, as a next step, we encourage the Council to add rape and other forms of gender-based violence as an additional trigger for the mechanism.

Some parties to armed conflict have recruited and used boys and girls as child soldiers year after year, in defiance of both international law and the Council's own resolutions. Between 2002 and 2008, at least 14 parties to armed conflict have been named in all five of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict. Those persistent violators include the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in Colombia, the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, and the Government forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar.

Those persistent violators should be subject to the Council's strongest action. In resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the Security Council said that it would consider the imposition of targeted measures, such as arms embargoes, against parties that do not end their use of child soldiers. Yet the Security Council has taken targeted measures against just one individual, imposing a travel ban and asset freeze on a former commander in Côte d'Ivoire.

The Security Council cannot expect to achieve accountability based on empty threats. To ensure their own credibility, Security Council members must be prepared to exercise their powers to impose targeted measures when warranted. That entails systematically referring information to relevant sanctions committees and, in other cases, applying measures through country-specific or thematic resolutions of the full Security Council.

Finally, I would like to address the Security Council Working Group's use of its toolkit in responding to grave violations against children. The toolkit provides a valuable array of actions to encourage parties to armed conflict to comply with their international obligations. While the Working Group has used some of the actions in the toolkit regularly, others have been used seldom or even not at all. Those tools are already available to Council members, and they should immediately put them to use. Full and robust use of those tools will result in improved protection for children and accountability from perpetrators. There is no time to waste.

As NGOs working on behalf of children in appalling circumstances, we support the Security Council's important efforts. We will continue to participate in the monitoring and reporting mechanism and to build and strengthen programmes for children on the ground. We will continue to pressure perpetrators to end their violations and to offer support to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. For us, those are urgent priorities.

We commend the Security Council on the progress it has made to end violations against children, but we appeal to it not to stop short of making that progress consistent and tangible for children caught up in extremely dangerous situations. We urge Council members to commit to negotiating a new resolution within the next year to close existing gaps, maintain the progress achieved to date, and ensure that all parties to armed conflict are held to account for their violations against children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): How many of us around this horseshoe-shaped table have children? Who in this Chamber does not want the best for his son or daughter? Three hundred thousand

children have been forcibly separated from their families. That represents half of Belgium's children between the ages of 11 and 15. Let us think of the stark dilemma facing those children: kill or be killed. They are kidnapped, drugged and abused, and forced to commit the worst of atrocities, sometimes against their own families. As fathers and mothers, we cannot resign ourselves to that situation.

During my recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo I had an opportunity to see for myself the distress of children caught up in armed conflict. Beyond all the available reports and statistics, looking into the eyes of a girl who had been abused, raped and even mutilated made it possible for me to realize the horror that sexual violence means, especially for children. I am convinced that children who have known only war and who owe their survival to their Kalashnikovs are not a lost cause when it comes to peace and development. To the contrary, they are an essential part of it.

The problem of children and armed conflict is well known. It has been clearly described and analysed in the report (S/2007/757) of the Secretary-General. It is not just a question of human rights and development assistance. It is also a matter of peace and security. I would even go as far as saying that it is also a question of humanity. The recommendations made by Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, must be implemented quickly. Too much time has already passed. The fates of too many children have already been sealed.

Beyond the international awareness that has resulted from the publication of the list of armed State and non-State groups guilty of recruiting or using children, that public list is above all an important deterrent that can brook no compromise. With the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) and the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the Security Council now has essential information at its disposal to enable it to act and apply pressure on those armed groups. The protection of children in every phase of an armed conflict is never negotiable. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to adopt the necessary sanctions against individuals and groups that continue to recruit children. Combating impunity through national and international justice mechanisms is a crucial prelude to reconciliation and peace. The recent transfer of Mathieu Ngudjolo from Kinshasa to The Hague is a further step in that direction. Belgium fully supports that approach.

Sexual violence is another scourge receiving increasing attention from the Security Council, and from the United Nations system overall. As the Council is aware, with regard to monitoring the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), sexual violence is taken into account only when it is associated with the presence of child soldiers. We cannot limit ourselves to such situations alone. Sexual violence in conflict situations has tragic and long-term consequences for those affected by it. This is one of the most heinous and appalling practices of wartime. The Belgian Government advocates strengthening the mechanism established by virtue of resolution 1612 (2005) by including in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General a list of parties to conflict responsible for systematic sexual violence.

Combating the phenomenon of child soldiers is an imperative that must compel all of us, without exception, to act. The Security Council must become more involved in this issue. It must also encourage other United Nations bodies to vastly intensify the political pressure that is necessary to put an end to these abuses — "hyper-pressure" is needed. Member States and international agencies and organizations must translate their commitments into concrete action. For my part, on behalf of the Belgian Government — as Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt did last September (see S/PV.5749) — I can assure the Council that Belgium will act tirelessly to that end. In the same vein, Belgium will continue to advocate for a binding instrument to ban cluster bombs, which, as we all well know, affect children in particular.

I want to believe that today's debate will lead to an increased commitment on the part of the Council. During the 2002 special session of the General Assembly devoted to children, Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressed the children of the world in these words: "Yet we, the grown-ups, have failed you deplorably in upholding many of [your rights]" and "We, the grown-ups, must reverse this list of failures" (*A/S-27/PV.1, p. 4*).

That was in 2002. Today, in 2008, however, armed conflicts in the Kivus, Colombia and other affected regions are still making victims of children. Those children too have the right to live in safety. Let

us give them hope. It is our duty to guarantee their basic rights.

Mr. Craxi (Italy) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Security Council, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs Samuel Lewis-Navarro of Panama, for having organized this debate, which provides us a valuable opportunity to discuss the issue of children and armed conflict. We believe that the Security Council has a particular responsibility in combating this reprehensible phenomenon.

Allow me to express Italy's support for the work of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Council and all non-governmental organizations working to protect children around the world.

The statistics before us are appalling. They require immediate action by the international community. In the past 10 years, armed conflicts have been responsible for the deaths of more than 2 million children and the maiming of another 6 million. Likewise, millions of children are today refugees. Others have been taken hostage or trafficked illegally. The international community cannot remain idle.

Italy has always been deeply involved in promoting the rights of all children. Under Italy's presidency in 2003, the European Union (EU) adopted its Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. Thanks to that instrument, the European Union is taking concrete steps in multilateral forums and as regards its relations with third countries to protect children caught up in armed conflict. Similarly, we have made this issue one of the priorities vis-à-vis our candidacy for the Human Rights Council.

We believe that there is a very close link between development and protecting the rights of children. We need to act in societies afflicted by conflict in order to provide children with prospects for a different future. We need to take up specific projects in health, education and labour and to offer children real, clearly defined options to help them reintegrate into civilian society. In that respect, Italy is using its development cooperation efforts to confirm its commitment to protecting children as we develop new assistance strategies in this area.

We support the United Nations in all its programmes for children. Italy has funded UNICEF projects in the specific and special case of Afghanistan, where there are some initiatives focused on education and school agencies. Italian assistance to Iraq includes a contribution to UNICEF to improve the condition of children who have suffered the consequences of conflict. We are determined to pursue that specific effort.

We support and actively participate in the Council's Working Group, hoping that its role will become greater and that its recommendations will be implemented quickly.

Today, I would like to welcome the submission of the report of the Secretary-General for 2007 and express our support for its content and, in particular, for its recommendations. We share the idea that in order to combat this heinous phenomenon, we need a comprehensive strategy that is not limited to combating the recruitment of children. I therefore wish to join my European colleagues in encouraging the Security Council to include rape and other acts of serious sexual and gender-based violence against children among those violations that would cause a party to a conflict to be included in the annex of the report of the Secretary-General. Italy therefore supports the recommendation by the Secretary-General to submit to the International Criminal Court cases of violations of children's rights in armed conflicts that are under its jurisdiction.

Finally, allow me to recall that Italy endorses the position of the European Union, which is actively engaged in efforts for the international community to adopt a legal instrument to ban submunition weapons, which cause unacceptable suffering to civilian populations, in particular to children.

I must conclude by saying that we have the duty to ensure that this debate will signify an important and, as someone said, historic moment in combating the phenomenon of children in armed conflict. For that reason, I would hope that this debate would represent a crucial and decisive stage on the path towards a new Security Council resolution, to be adopted during the next debate on this subject, which would take into account lessons learned, situations that can no longer wait and progress made since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005).

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya): We thank you, Mr. Minister, for presiding over this important meeting of the Security Council. We wish, at the outset, to extend our sincere thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for the valuable briefing in which she presented the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757). We would also like to thank the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their two valuable briefings.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is greatly concerned about the abuses children are exposed to — including abductions, killings, maimings, sexual abuse and recruitment in armed conflict — as listed in the consecutive reports of the Secretary-General, which highlight the increase and frequency of such shameful acts. My country strongly condemns all such practices.

In this context, we support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that calls upon the States concerned to take strict measures within their national legislation and in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law to hold the perpetrators of such crimes accountable and to impose upon them the maximum deterrent penalty without any opportunity for impunity.

We also support the opinion of the Secretary-General that the detention of children in various conflict zones, based on claims that they are associated with different armed groups, is a direct violation of international legal standards. In particular, we would mention the cruel treatment suffered by Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya calls upon the international community to take the necessary deterrent measures in this regard. We strongly condemn Israeli military operations that have led over the past few years to the killing of more than 800 Palestinian children and the displacement of thousands of other children because of the destruction of their family homes. In addition, thousands of Palestinian children are subjected to suffering on a daily basis while trying to reach their schools because of the racist separation wall constructed in the Palestinian occupied territory and the hundreds of checkpoints in the West Bank. We regret that the briefings this morning did not deal with that unique case of suffering, because of its long-standing nature. It is a deliberate policy that has been adopted by the occupiers and must be criminalized, just as other harmful practices that impact children have been criminalized.

We also agree with the Secretary-General concerning the importance of the development and revitalization of long-term programmes and plans of action. Moreover, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes should emerge from local communities, so that the reintegration of children in those societies can be permanent and successful. We call upon the international community and its donors and financial institutions to provide a helping hand and assistance for implementing such programmes.

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts endeavours to protect children and save them from areas of conflict and deserves our praise and appreciation. We would like the Working Group to avoid selectivity and double standards in formulating its recommendations and in carrying out its work. Its recommendations should not be politicized. The Security Council should stay away from taking punitive measures of imposing punishment against countries whose nationals commit criminal acts against children. Instead, it should place the responsibility for imposing punishment squarely within the competence of national legislation subject to the provisions of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): It is a pleasure to have you here with us, Mr. Minister, presiding over this meeting. We thank you for convening it; this is a very important subject, as we have already heard.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General and the Office of Under-Secretary-General Coomaraswamy for their diligence in implementing their mandates under resolution 1612 (2005). I would also like to thank Ambassador Ripert and his team for tirelessly and diligently guiding the Council's Working Group on this subject.

Our subject today was first comprehensively presented to the international community in 1996, in Ms. Graça Machel's report on children affected by armed conflict (A/51/306). The strong and committed response to her report resulted in the creation of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and in the evolution of an important series of Security Council resolutions that established a process to assist the

United Nations and its Member States in addressing this very serious matter.

The process has at its core the development of action plans by States and non-State actors, identified by the Secretary-General in his annual reports, to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of the international obligations applicable to them. These action plans have proved to be a positive way to guide and measure progress, and we believe it would be useful for all parties listed in annex II of the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757) to be similarly required to submit such action plans.

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to address the tragedy of children and armed conflict. So far, the Working Group has engaged on situations as diverse as Burma, Burundi, Sri Lanka and Sudan. Its efforts are being tried and tested to bring positive changes in the lives of children affected by armed conflict. As its work evolves, the Working Group may need to use additional tools, including targeted and graduated measures, against persistent violators to persuade them to comply with applicable international law.

We are pleased that the Working Group has been able to see progress in Côte d'Ivoire, where parties previously associated with the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers have ended those practices and have been removed from the list of violators contained in the Secretary-General's report.

However, our work has just begun. The recent press statement issued by Under-Secretary-General Coomaraswamy informs us of an alarming statistic: over a quarter of a million child soldiers remain engaged in conflicts around the globe. One such child is too many.

We remain deeply concerned by the situation of children and armed conflict in Burma, one of the worst in the world. The Burmese army continues to recruit child soldiers, some as young as 10 years old, and to arrest children for desertion. Some children are sent into combat only days after deployment to units, or are forced to participate in human rights abuses, such as the burning of villages and using civilians for forced labour. The Burmese regime prevents a comprehensive assessment of the magnitude of this problem by denying the necessary access for international experts. My delegation urges immediate and unimpeded access to communities in Burma for the United Nations country team as well as for international humanitarian organizations in order to permit progress in ending this tragedy.

My delegation is encouraged by the reported slight improvement in the overall situation concerning children in armed conflict in Southern Sudan. We urge full cooperation from the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan to follow through on the commitments made and to put an end to all violations against and recruitment of children, including their recruitment and use in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law.

However, we remain deeply concerned about ongoing recruitment and use of child soldiers by Government forces and various armed groups throughout Sudan, particularly in the Darfur region and in the camps for internally displaced persons on both sides of the Sudan-Chad border. We also deplore the continued use of rape as a weapon of war in Darfur, with an increasing targeting of young girls. My delegation urges the commitment of all parties to put an end to these violations and to grant United Nations entities unimpeded access for monitoring and verification purposes.

In Chad, as the Secretary-General's report describes, the forced recruitment and use in armed conflict of children is all too widespread and is practiced by all parties to the conflict, with thousands of children continuing to be held by armed forces and groups. My delegation urges all parties to permit access by the United Nations monitors and others attempting to ascertain the extent of the problem, and welcomes the news that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is currently working to increase its child protection staff in Chad.

The United States would also like to take this opportunity to focus on the important, but sometimes forgotten processes that occur after a child has been demobilized. Often, the reintegration of children into their communities is not as thorough as we would prefer. Recidivism or the inability of a child to function properly within his family or community units is an issue of great concern to all of us from a human standpoint, and certainly to my Government as a major donor to such programmes. The United States applauds

the hard work of UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and their partners. We encourage all Member States to allow full access and cooperation in order to accomplish the goals of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration.

My Government fully supports the effort by the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the Security Council to end the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. However, we must note two areas of disagreement with the Secretary-General's report.

First, with respect to the recommendation in paragraph 166, we do not agree that the Security Council should have a general policy or practice of referring cases to the International Criminal Court. Different States have different views about the best mechanism for combating crimes against children. We think it important to bear in mind that not all United Nations Member States are parties to the Rome Statute, and those who are not need to be taken into account.

Secondly, as to the Secretary-General's suggestion in paragraph 171 that Member States should address immediately the subject of cluster munitions, my delegation would also ask that the Working Group focus on the substantial issues already and clearly within its mandate. Discussion of cluster munitions, for example, is better left to weapons experts operating through the United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons.

The recruitment or use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law and other abuses, such as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals, are unacceptable acts. It is our duty as members of the Security Council to do as much as we can to eliminate the tragedy of children affected by armed conflict, and we listened carefully to suggestions shared by previous speakers on how the Council can best do so.

My Government remains committed to using the tools available, including regular assessments and reporting, public condemnation, the deployment of child protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions as appropriate and targeted and gradual measures against violators, to end this tragedy.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased, Mr. Minister, to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council today. We are grateful to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Veneman and the representative of civil society for the updated information they provided on the situation with regard to the protection of children in armed conflict.

The Russian Federation is committed to ensuring the rights of children and will continue its active endeavours to that end. These include, in particular, our intention to ratify the relevant Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the near future.

We thank the Secretary-General for having prepared his report (S/2007/757), which we have studied with great attention. We take note of its focus on practical measures and its copious compilation of facts. We share the Secretary-General's concern at the deteriorating situation of children in Afghanistan and Iraq. We lay stress on the responsibility of all parties, including the multinational forces, to ensure the safety and security of civilian populations and to ensure strict compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, the report does not touch on the deaths of children due to the actions of private security firms in Iraq. We support inclusion of the Taliban in the report's appended list of violating parties, which opens the door for consideration of the situation in the Council's Working Group.

Suitable attention should be paid to Iraq. A few days ago a tape was publicly released in which Al-Qaida terrorists are teaching Iraqi child soldiers to kidnap and kill people. Another alarming indicator is the large number of children incarcerated in military prisons of the Multinational Forces. The report refers to 800 such children, but other information puts that figure much higher. We believe UNICEF should pay attention to the causes and conditions of their captivity. We are convinced of the need for prompt deployment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in such situations.

We support the Secretary-General's proposal to send child protection advisors to Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and including them in operations in Darfur, Chad and the Central African Republic.

We welcome some progress made in Côte d'Ivoire, which has resulted in the parties to the conflict being de-listed from the annex to the

Secretary-General's report. We agree on the need to persist in our focus on these kinds of situation so that the improvement will not be short-lived.

We again state our support for the notion of an equal approach to all serious violations, including not just the use of child soldiers but the five other categories of violations, including the murder and maiming of children. The proposal for equal consideration for all situations requires clarification, as do the recommendations for deploying the monitoring and reporting mechanism in all situations of concern. We believe the priority regarding resolution 1612 (2005) should be given to the more acute and widespread armed conflicts on the Council's agenda.

It is not possible to protect children without interaction with the Governments of countries gripped with conflict or in the post-conflict reconstruction state. In that regard, the United Nations and its Security Council should focus more on supporting national measures to strengthen that protection, on effective implementation of programmes to demobilize and reintegrate underage minors, on establishing social, economic and legal conditions for preventing recruitment and on other crimes against children.

We wish to express the hope that the comprehensive, systemic efforts of the Organization, in cooperation with interested States, will result in concrete results, easing the situation of children in armed conflict.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me thank the delegation of Panama for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. My delegation thanks you, Mr. President, for coming to New York to preside over this meeting as an indication of how your delegation takes this matter in all its seriousness. Allow me also to extend our appreciation to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their contribution to this meeting today.

In the past year important precedents have been set to end impunity for crimes against children, particularly the recruitment and use of children by Government forces and armed groups. Several individuals who have committed grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict have been brought to justice by national, international and special courts and tribunals. A noteworthy achievement has been the delisting of the parties to conflict in Cote d'Ivoire from the annexes to the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757). These parties earned their delisting by ceasing the recruitment of children and taking concerted measures to identify and release children for rehabilitation. The Security Council should continue to call upon all parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report to prepare, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children and other violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict.

Despite positive developments in the promotion and protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict, the Secretary-General's report illustrates that armed conflicts continue to have an impact on children around the world. Children continue to be recruited and exploited as child soldiers by parties to armed conflict. Children continue to be killed or maimed in war zones due to the use of indiscriminate weapons such as landmines and cluster munitions. Children continue to be targeted with various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape during armed conflicts. Abductions, the denial of humanitarian access to children and the systematic and deliberate attacks on schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict have also escalated in certain conflict situations.

The cross-cutting nature of the issue of children and armed conflict warrants the attention of the Security Council. The Council should consider giving equal weight to all six categories of grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. Furthermore, the Council should refer to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution all six violations against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.

The task of monitoring and reporting and the submission of timely and accurate information to the Security Council by the monitoring and reporting mechanism could be enhanced by mainstreaming child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The inclusion of child protection advisers should therefore be considered when reviewing or creating mandates for United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions. The role of child protection advisers would contribute to more-consistent advocacy

and response for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

Furthermore, a zero-tolerance policy should be implemented with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeeping and related personnel. The implementation of a comprehensive strategy for assistance and support to the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel is also important so that all children who are victims of, or born as a result of, such abuse receive support.

The reintegration and rehabilitation of all children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups remains a priority. The international community should therefore continue to provide adequate resources to develop and support national rehabilitation and reintegration programmes that are relevant and effective so as to ensure long-term sustainability and success of such interventions. Those programmes should also take into account the special concerns of girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here today and presiding over our meeting. Our thanks go also to your Ambassador, Mr. Arias, for organizing today's open debate on what we have all agreed is a crucial and deeply worrying issue. I join others in thanking our French colleagues for their excellent leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The United Kingdom is committed to playing an active role in international efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict. We welcome the valuable and high-quality work of Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. We are grateful to her for her briefing today, and also for the briefings by Ms. Veneman and Ms. Becker.

The United Kingdom supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to include child protection advisers within the mandates of peacekeeping and relevant political missions in future to strengthen monitoring and reporting.

We also recognize the role of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups on the ground, which often operate at personal risk and without whose support this mechanism could not operate half as effectively as it does.

We welcome this latest report, and we are pleased to note a number of positive developments. The recent evidence suggesting that active recruitment and use of children by armed groups in Côte d'Ivoire has ended is encouraging. The engagement of the Government of Nepal in preparation for the release and rehabilitation of child combatants is also welcome, although implementation of these plans is overdue.

The decrease in unlawful recruitment of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a further positive sign. The cooperation of the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the International Criminal Court on the indictment of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and Germain Katanga, and in the recent arrest of Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, is very welcome. Nevertheless, serious challenges remain, not least with regard to abuses perpetrated by illegal armed militia in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United Kingdom welcomes the fact that parties to conflict in countries such as the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Burma and the Sudan are cooperating with monitoring and reporting mechanisms and have made progress on concrete time-bound action plans to stop recruitment of children and other violations and abuses. But greater engagement is needed.

We would welcome further details on progress made in the development and implementation of the action plans of parties within Burma. We urge the Myanmar Government to adhere to its commitment to the Special Representative to cooperate in establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

All six grave violations outlined in the report continue to be of great concern to the United Kingdom. Bearing in mind the Secretary-General's recommendation, we are ready to contribute to a review of the violations that trigger the listing of a party in the annexes of his reports.

With that in mind, we are especially concerned that instances of sexual and gender-based violence during conflict, including rape, have increased, in particular, in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. There is evidence that rape is being used as an instrument of war in those regions to

terrorize local populations. Further data collection and analysis is needed to provide a basis on which to hold those responsible to account.

It is important that such crimes do not go unpunished. The United Kingdom fully supports the role of the International Criminal Court in investigating and prosecuting these and other violations and abuses against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.

To be relevant, the Security Council's work on children and armed conflict has to have an impact on the ground. As I have emphasized, progress has been made, but serious challenges remain. We must continue to evaluate our efforts and to monitor the implementation of our Working Group's conclusions. A number of persistent violators are mentioned in the report before us. The United Kingdom strongly believes that the Security Council and its Working Group should make full use of the range of options for addressing systematic violations, as set out in resolution 1612 (2005) and in the Working Group's toolkit. That might involve use of targeted measures against perpetrators who refuse to undertake the actions we demand of them. Certainly, inaction should not be an option.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, Burkina Faso joins other members of the Council in welcoming you, along with Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, and Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy. Your participation in this debate, Sir, shows the importance that you attach to the question of children and armed conflict.

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her very instructive information. We also commend the Working Group, chaired by France, for its meticulous follow-up on this very important question. Obviously, we cannot fail to thank Ms. Ann Veneman and Ms. Jo Becker for their valuable information on this subject.

As we all know, the background of this scourge is still marked with horrors. The terrible reality is that thousands of children continue to die each year from the direct impact of war, and that thousands more die from indirect consequences, including malnutrition, disease, psychiatric conditions and mental disorders.

In fact, the report notes the persistence of serious violations against children by illegal armed groups and by some governmental forces and indicates that, in spite of the setting of a statutory minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces through national and international legislation, in particular the 25 May 2000 National Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, thousands of children are still being abducted, recruited and forcibly used as soldiers in areas of armed conflict.

In addition, we deplore the fact that violence stemming from clashes, cluster bomb or mine explosions and attacks against schools and hospitals continues to kill thousands of children and to wound a very significant number. Another unfortunate crime relates to blocked deliveries of humanitarian assistance due to growing insecurity as result of ambushes, thefts and killings, all in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

It is thus vital that appropriate measures be taken to spare the lives of children and to encourage and facilitate humanitarian action.

Here, we wish to make a few recommendations, first of all, to Member States. We call upon Governments to criminalize the recruitment of child soldiers and to enact legislation to protect humanitarian action. We encourage States that have not yet done so to ratify and ensure compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts.

Then, with respect to parties to conflicts, we urge the international community to do everything it can to ensure that parties do not target schools and, indeed, that they make a commitment to protect them. Parties to conflicts must commit themselves to sparing primary health-care services, including water delivery, and they must guarantee safe passage for humanitarian organizations so that they can deliver assistance and services to children, including in resettlement and refugee camps.

With respect to aid and assistance organizations, we call on donors, on a priority basis, to include in their emergency programmes support for health and education so that in time of armed conflict education and the delivery of sanitation and health services for children will continue in camps for refugees or internally displaced persons.

Finally, we urge the Security Council to consider measures — coercive measures, if possible — against any party to an armed conflict that continues to systematically violate legal provisions established to protect children in a period of armed conflict. In particular, it is the Security Council's duty to ensure full implementation of all of its relevant resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005), and to ensure strict compliance with the recommendations of its Working Group, with which parties are called upon to cooperate more.

Here, Burkina Faso welcomes the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children in armed conflicts, whose daily action towards its objectives has had a deterrent effect. We also call for an extension of the mechanism to all cases of violations, and we encourage all those who have joined it to be frank and productive in cooperating with it.

Ongoing and systematic consideration of the question of children and armed conflict shows the extent of the Security Council's grave concern. Children are the future of humanity. Therefore, we must never cease to denounce anything that seriously threatens their existence and their future.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank you, Sir, for making a special trip to New York to preside over this meeting. China welcomes the presence of Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France; Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium; and Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy. I wish to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her briefing and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for her statement. In addition, I welcome the presence of Ms. Jo Becker, representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, and thank her for her statement.

China is very much concerned about the violations committed against children in armed conflicts in various countries. China is opposed to the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to other violations committed against children in armed conflicts. We support the efforts of the United Nations, including the Security Council, to enhance the protection of children in armed conflict. On this occasion, I should like to emphasize the following points.

First, the Security Council should strengthen its efforts to prevent conflict and maintain peace with a view to providing protection for children by preventing, reducing and resolving the causes of armed conflicts. The need to protect children in armed conflicts arises out of the conflicts themselves. Therefore, the Council should base itself on efforts to resolve armed conflicts, by taking actions within its mandate to reduce the number of such conflicts. Meanwhile, efforts should be made to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and to improve the humanitarian situations in conflict areas.

In the current situation, children in some conflict areas have become victims of the escalation of conflict, while the positive progress made in peace processes in other areas has given children hope for a better future. That proves once again that the Security Council should give great attention to efforts to resolve conflicts.

Secondly, in efforts to address the issue of children and armed conflict, the role of the Governments concerned must be consistently respected and supported, as emphasized repeatedly in resolution 1612 (2005). Those Governments bear primary responsibility for protecting their children. Other parties must seek the cooperation of the Governments concerned in a joint effort to address the violations committed against children in armed conflicts. The Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts should enhance their communication with the Governments concerned. They should acknowledge and support the positive measures that those Governments have taken, so as to improve mutual trust. At the same time, the issue of children must not be politicized. The protection of children should not be used as a pretext for interference in a country's internal affairs.

Thirdly, resolution 1612 (2005) should continue to serve as a basis for improving and perfecting the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the efforts of the Working Group. Since the mechanism's main task is to collect information and carry out work on the ground, it must seek the cooperation of the Governments concerned. We hope that the Secretary-General will assess the achievements and inefficiencies

of the mechanism so that it can be further improved during the next phase of work.

Under the coordination of France, as Chair, the Working Group of the Security Council has considered the issue of children in quite a number of countries and has submitted relevant recommendations to the Council. We hope that the Working Group will maintain its professionalism, seek to address relevant issues through cooperation and constructive consultation with the Governments concerned and submit effective recommendations to the Council.

China has always supported the use of dialogue to resolve specific issues. China has always opposed the wilful use or threat of use of sanctions in the Security Council. Caution is called for in dealing with the issue of children and armed conflict, as well as in using sanctions.

Conflicts vary and thus must not be addressed through a one-size-fits-all approach. Once again, China calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to truly honour their obligations, abide by international humanitarian law and respect and protect children's rights. In post-conflict reconstruction efforts, the international community should place priority on reintegrating children into family, school and society and should ensure that adequate resources are provided in that regard.

If we are to resolve the issue of children and armed conflict, efforts by the Security Council alone will be far from sufficient. We encourage UNICEF, the World Bank and other international institutions to play a greater role in helping the countries concerned to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflicts. We also welcome the positive role played by non-governmental organizations.

Before concluding, I wish to inform participants in this meeting that, not long ago, China ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and has therefore become a party to the Protocol. We call on all countries that have not yet done so to ratify and accede to the Protocol. China hopes that, through joint efforts by all parties, the situation of children in armed conflicts will be effectively improved so that children can have a better tomorrow.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): The delegation of Viet Nam is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this important debate of the Security Council. Your presence attests to the importance that Panama attaches to the work of this body, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. We look forward to continuing to work closely with your delegation to achieve our common goals.

I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their briefings. We also welcome the high-level participation of France, Belgium and Italy in this debate.

In children, we see our hope for a better world tomorrow. In children, therefore, we invest our best resources. We have committed to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to making this world a world fit for children. In carrying out our commitments, we have achieved progress in some parts of the world; in others, we are continuing to see children killed, maimed and suffering from all sorts of ill-treatment in situations of armed conflict. For those who, by chance, escape the killings and those who are being told to kill, the negative impacts of such acts are not much different.

The current report presents us with both progress and challenges. While noting positive developments in some African, Asian and Latin American countries, as reflected in the decrease in the number of cases of recruitment and use of children in situations of armed conflict or as reflected in the measures the Governments in question have taken to prevent or punish those acts, we share the concern over this continued practice.

This together with acts such as attacks on schoolchildren, sexual abuse of children by those who are mandated and paid to protect them, torture of children or their deprivation of food and education constitute serious violations of children's basic rights as recognized in international human rights and humanitarian laws and in specific provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Condemning those violations, Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and previous relevant Council resolutions call upon all parties concerned to undertake measures to protect children affected by armed conflict and ensure their rights and well-being.

Concerning the implementation of these resolutions, we share the view on the need for a broad strategy of conflict prevention that addresses the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, including by promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights. In this connection, we recognize the important role and contributions of UNICEF and other specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

Resolution 1612 (2005) requested the Secretary-General to implement a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the issue of children in armed conflict. While commending the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in preparing the report at hand, we wish to stress that in order to ensure its quality, reliability and objectivity, strengthened dialogue and cooperation with national Governments, who bear the primary and ultimate responsibility to protect and care for the children of their own countries, is of vital importance, as are consultations with the United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations.

Some Governments complained — rightly or wrongly — that they had not been consulted with regard to their views that the situations in their respective countries did not constitute armed conflicts and that those situations should not be mentioned in the report at all. This matter deserves the Council's attention.

Equal treatment of all situations of armed conflict can also be an area for improvement. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), which has put forth many plausible efforts, should improve its performance and working method with a view to putting greater emphasis on prevention.

One of the first signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Viet Nam has also signed and verified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and submitted its periodic implementation reports. All basic legal documents of the country, such as the constitution, the law on military duties and the civil code, provide for measures to ensure that children under 18 are not recruited into the armed forces and do not engage in direct combat.

We look forward to contributing our part towards full and effective implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council, with a view to creating a world fit for children.

Finally, we thank the delegation of France for the draft presidential statement on this matter and look forward to working constructively with the other Council members for its early adoption.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to warmly welcome the new Permanent Representative of Croatia, Ambassador Neven Jurica, who was a distinguished representative of his country to the Government of Panama and with whom there is a link of friendship and esteem.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to thank the Security Council presidency of Panama for organizing the open debate on children and armed conflict.

I would also like to use this opportunity to welcome the presence among us of the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, Mr. Samuel Lewis-Navarro, as well as Their Excellencies Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, and Mr. Charles Michel, the Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium.

We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict and commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, as well as the non-governmental organizations working on the ground.

Croatia welcomes the Security Council's active engagement in addressing violations against children in armed conflict in the past nine years. The Council's adoption of action plans and the practice of the independent reporting and monitoring mechanism have significantly contributed to the ending of recruitment of children by parties to armed conflict. However, stronger Council action is needed to ensure that all parties to armed conflict act in compliance with relevant Council resolutions and other relevant international instruments in order to secure the protection of children.

Croatia strongly endorses the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. If adopted and implemented by Governments, those

recommendations will create a significant step forward in addressing the current scope of monitoring and reporting, which is currently too limited.

In particular, Croatia believes that reporting on the six grave violations against children should not be contingent solely upon whether a country is listed by the Secretary-General as recruiting child soldiers. Application of the monitoring and reporting mechanism needs to be expanded to include all of those violations in all situations identified in both annexes of the report of the Secretary-General.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the rising sexual violence against children and women in situations of armed conflict as an unacceptable method of warfare. We encourage the Security Council to use targeted measures when needed and in accordance with resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1612 (2005), where special measures are called for in order to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.

Croatia strongly supports the work of child protection advisers in all of the missions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, as well as the work of United Nations mission personnel guarding internally displaced persons camps, as it has become evident in the report of the Secretary-General that those areas have become the recruiting grounds for child soldiers.

Croatia continues to advocate a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual abuse of women and children and consequently trains Croatian participants in the 15 United Nations missions in which it participates on issues of child rights. We would therefore encourage all troop-contributing countries to do the same.

We urge Governments to end impunity for perpetrators accused of committing violations against children in armed conflict. We believe that the Security Council should refer those violations to the International Criminal Court in cases where national systems fail to address them, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

Croatia is actively engaged in the work of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We would like to see the strengthening of the Working Group's methods by the use of organized briefings with concerned countries six months after the adoption of the Working Group's conclusions on the situation in those countries concerned. In that way, the Working Group and the concerned country would be given an opportunity to review the progress achieved based on the work of both parties. We urge the Working Group to start using all the possible actions provided in the tool kit, as needed, especially field trips followed by a report.

We urge all parties to armed conflict to stop using child soldiers and to start acting in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, including the Paris Principles. While working in the Security Council, member States have a responsibility to protect peace and security for children, especially where they are being brutally exploited. If a whole generation of children is being systematically ruined, either physically or mentally, there can be no positive changes for the future of their respective countries.

Allow me to also express the support of my country for the idea of the adoption of a new Security Council resolution that would provide a stronger mechanism for the protection of children in armed conflicts.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin by thanking you, Sir, and your country for convening this important debate. As you well know, Costa Rica shares with Panama a particular concern for children and a special love of peace, which is expressed in the shared desire of our peoples to live without a military force.

I thank the Secretary-General for his seventh annual report on children and armed conflict, and Ms. Coomaraswamy for her statement. I also thank Ms. Veneman and Ms. Becker of Watchlist for their statements, which have certainly enriched the debate.

The situation of children in zones of armed conflict has been and will continue to be a source of ongoing concern to the United Nations. The calamities of war do not distinguish between children and adults and afflict them equally; however, many of those calamities are more serious with respect to children. Being abandoned, orphaned, uprooted or disabled and lacking opportunity particularly affect the hope for a better life that children should always be able to cherish. It is true that encouraging progress has been made in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers in some countries, but it is also true that there has been none in many other areas affected by violent conflict, where the use of

children to settle the scores of their elders is a flagrant violation of their most fundamental rights.

Children who are manipulated or forced to carry a rifle instead of books beneath their arm need us to do more than hold an annual debate. They need us to name those who compelled them and to include those names on the list of transgressors. They need decisive action from this Council. It is imperative that we fight impunity with determination.

Costa Rica maintains that children who are used by armed groups and fall victim to abuse and grave systematic violations of their rights need the Council to engage in a serious assessment of applicable effective measures and sanctions against those who persist in such deplorable conduct. The Council has a responsibility to the children of the world to ensure that all its resolutions are complied with. In that respect, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should regularly provide comprehensive information on the crimes to the sanctions committees, where such exist. The Working Group should also recommend to the Council measures and sanctions against those who consistently violate its resolutions where no relevant sanctions committee exists.

It is time for the Council to address with greater resolve the existence of solid national and international mechanisms to ensure that those responsible for such crimes are brought to justice. They cannot go unpunished. If we are to guarantee the rights of children, we believe it essential to set aside national interests and convenience, which are always short-sighted and far removed from our grand collective objectives. The Council should not shy from referring the cases of the most notorious perpetrators of crimes against children to the International Criminal Court. That would send a powerful message of intolerance of those who do not hesitate to sacrifice children to their narrow selfish concerns. Effective Security Council action in that area requires us immediately to review the criteria of the monitoring and reporting mechanism so that we can more appropriately and effectively address each of the six serious violations established in resolution 1612 (2005).

I cannot fail to refer to the alarming increase of sexual violence that is used as a weapon of war against thousands of girls and that provides a clear argument for why we should attach equal importance to all grave violations. It is also incumbent upon the Council to ensure that protection measures are commensurate with the needs of each case. It is the responsibility of all States to protect their peoples, and the responsibility to protect is especially important with respect to children. When a State is unable to protect its children, it is the obligation of the international community to fill that gap.

I cannot conclude without reiterating our condemnation of the killing and mutilation of children by mines and cluster munitions. For Costa Rica, it is an unshirkable obligation of all those participating in armed conflict to provide precise information on the quantity and location of such artefacts, as well as any other information relevant to the clean-up and rehabilitation of contaminated areas. It is urgent that we make progress in the Oslo process of drafting a legally binding instrument to prohibit the use, production, sale and storage of cluster munitions.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): I should like to preface our statement by expressing our profound appreciation at seeing you, Sir, preside over our deliberations today. We wish also to warmly acknowledge the participation of Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France; Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium; and Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

We wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her important briefing, as well as the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their statements. We should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his important report.

This timely meeting reflects the strong desire of the Council to address an issue of paramount importance: the welfare and security of children in armed conflict. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the various forms of violence committed against children in armed conflict. The sight of children carrying machine guns and other weaponry and engaging in combat is absolutely unacceptable and totally reprehensible. Indeed, it is an affront to international humanitarian law, which clearly prohibits such practices, either by armed forces or armed groups.

We, the Security Council, have to act, not only against those abuses but also to work together with the concerned States to eradicate them. We believe that

those issues can be comprehensively resolved when the relevant parties work together and cooperate in a spirit of partnership and good faith. Such a spirit can ensure that the requisite level of trust is built among the parties in order to ensure the sustainability of our efforts.

When addressing this issue in the Council, we sometimes fail to remember that most of the situations outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/727) pertain to developing countries facing complex and sometimes insurmountable difficulties. Should we neglect that notion, at some point in the future we might find ourselves at an impasse. The Council can continue to lodge requests with those countries to address the issues, yet progress in implementation also depends upon building national capacities.

We strongly believe that the issue before us can be properly addressed only by adopting a broad strategy of conflict prevention and by tackling the root causes of armed conflict, with their attendant negative impacts on children. Ultimately, the promotion of sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights are the best guarantors of the welfare of children.

It is for those pertinent reasons that we support and further encourage development agencies to participate in addressing root causes. They should be at the forefront of our efforts. They can make a meaningful and concrete contribution to addressing the welfare and well-being of children and preventing the recurrence of those deplorable practices.

The successful release, rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed conflict require a comprehensive approach. It should be recognized that the Security Council's attention and the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General are not taking place in a vacuum. Not least, synergy is required among the long-established relevant United Nations entities focused on the welfare of children, most notably UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme.

On a specific point, the report made a clear assessment that the use of cluster munitions is causing lethal and irreparable damage to children, not only in armed conflict situations themselves but also in the aftermath of conflict. We strongly deplore the use of such munitions targeted directly or indirectly at children. Remedial actions in the form of rehabilitation and reintegration must be sought. Furthermore, we are gravely concerned about the growing so-called collateral damage that has taken the lives of many children. The Council, for its part, should pronounce itself clearly in rejecting the practice by State or non-State actors of indiscriminately utilizing mine-infesting weapons.

With regard to the next report on this issue, we are of the view that the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should continue to spare no effort in further improving and refining its methodology in drafting and formulating the report, in particular by making reference to countries in armed conflict situations. The credibility and authority of the Office lie in the ability to maintain its objectivity and independence, as well as to forge constructive cooperation with the States concerned.

Lastly, Indonesia always maintains its principled views that transparency and inclusiveness are the bedrock of the work of all international organizations and their affiliated entities. We therefore recognize importance of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in continuing to enhance its methods of work.

Finally, we also wish to thank and pay tribute to France for its leadership in the preparation of the draft presidential statement on this issue that is before the Council.

Mr. Kouchner (France) (*spoke in French*): The tragedy of child soldiers forces us to be determined and uncompromising. In spite of the countless and inevitable difficulties, of which we are all aware, our sole objective should be the eradication of this barbarous phenomenon. That is why I am pleased that I could come from Paris to be here today with participants in a project that poses a challenge to us all. This issue constitutes an affront to all that we are. The United Nations must play a central role in combating this hateful form of slavery that turns victims into assassins.

The establishment in 2005 of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has already made it possible for us to act. That innovative and profoundly original mechanism — in which France had a major role in establishing and over which we have had the honour to preside since its

inception — has resulted in tangible progress. Thousands of children have been freed and returned to civilian life — especially in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and numerous other countries, which I shall forego naming. Recommendations have been made with regard to 10 of the 12 situations on the agenda. The Working Group will soon take up the last two pending cases, namely, those of the Philippines and Colombia. Lastly, for the first time, we are going to remove a country from that sad list — Côte d'Ivoire.

Those considerable gains could not have been achieved without the determination of the members of the Security Council, which I commend. But we know that they also owe a great deal to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. I pay tribute to her efforts, as well as those of UNICEF. I also wish to acknowledge the cooperation, in some cases on a voluntary basis, of all the countries affected by this terrible scourge. I thank them warmly.

In spite of those significant successes, I do not wish to give the impression that all the problems are being resolved. We still have much to do. There is the reappearance of children in the battlefields of Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma. I recently visited those countries, and I could tell of the horror still fresh in my mind. Just today, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan were placed on the list of situations of concern. There are many things to remind us daily of the forever unfinished nature of this struggle. As always, the international community must remain mobilized and redouble its efforts.

France would in particular like to see a strengthening of the deterrent character of the Working Group. Its members must not shy away from adopting strong targeted sanctions. Otherwise, what are we here for? This is an issue that pertains to its credibility. There is no credible deterrence without real sanctions.

International criminal justice — the International Criminal Court or other special tribunals — has made essential progress this year through remarkable actions, especially against Germain Katanga, Charles Taylor and Colonel Mathieu Ngudjolo, among others, charging them with the use and recruitment of children under the age of 15. The Working Group must follow up those actions by calling for the imposition of sanctions against uncooperative parties.

The Working Group's mandate is not limited to the issue of child soldiers alone. Although that is certainly its main priority, it also considers and formulates recommendations concerning five other grave violations of children's rights, including sexual violence. During a visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last month, I was able to see on the ground the seriousness and extent of the widespread, systematic and premeditated use of sexual crime as an instrument of war. That barbarity concerns us all. There, too, our failure to act would be reprehensible. I welcome the fact that the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo recognizes this as the most serious crime.

The Council's Working Group must absolutely strengthen its action on this question. In its recommendations it must demand that the belligerents draw up action plans to combat sexual violence and follow through on their implementation. Some might find it paradoxical that we ask the belligerents themselves to combat these crimes, but it is essential. At the same time, the military leadership must bear this in mind. It may be a paradox, it may even seem immoral, but it is effective. The Working Group should strengthen its efforts to combat impunity by relentlessly demanding the arrest of those responsible for rape and call on Governments to act in this regard.

In addition, I believe the time has come to reflect together on the possibility of permitting the Working Group to deal with the tragedy of sexual violence, independently of whether or not there are child soldiers in the country concerned. That would indisputably be a major step forward. Just as we came to grips with the problem of child soldiers, I am sure that we will reach a consensus on the need to remedy sexual violence.

As I said a moment ago, action by the Security Council is indispensable to moving forward on this question. Such action does not prevent other initiatives.

The European Union therefore adopted guidelines and an action plan on this question in 2003, in addition to a list of priority situations in which it will intervene in the future. The Slovene presidency of the European Union has decided to make children in armed conflict its priority in the area of human rights, a decision about which I am delighted.

France, for its part, organized together with UNICEF, in February 2007, a ministerial conference entitled "Free Children from War," at which 59 countries signed on to the Paris Commitments to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups, a collection of principles and good practices that will, we hope, significantly strengthen our efforts. Following that success, we organized, again together with UNICEF, a ministerial follow-up conference in October 2007, at which seven more countries joined the Paris Commitments. On 16 January 2008, a few days ago, we held a working meeting with the principal relevant actors that led to the establishment of a follow-up forum for the Paris Commitments, which Minister Rama Yade deals with. Its first meeting is scheduled to be held in September 2008 on the sidelines of the General Assembly session. I would like to thank members in advance for their active and resolute participation in that meeting.

Once again, this is a cause that must mobilize us all, completely and tirelessly. It is the least we can do for the tens of thousands of children who are innocent victims of a barbarity that through them, is an attack on the very future of our common humanity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity of Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Panama.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, and Ms. Jo Becker of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, representative of non-governmental organizations, for their briefings. We are also pleased to welcome here the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, the Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, Mr. Charles Michel, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Vittorio Craxi.

We all recognize the negative impact of armed conflicts on children. Innocent beings are deprived of an education, displaced and uprooted from their homes and haunted by the violence they witness or even commit. Lost generations are created, deprived of opportunities, which could unleash a permanent cycle of violence in their lives. The international community thus has an obligation to undertake efforts to prevent this scourge from continuing to affect children in armed conflict.

The establishment of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is evidence that neither the world nor the United Nations will continue to address these issues in a fragmented manner. That concept is clearly reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which reads:

> "We acknowledge that peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being. We recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing." (*resolution 60/1, para. 9*)

On the basis of that concept, the establishment of the Working Group is worthwhile and appropriate.

Nonetheless, protecting children in situations of armed conflict is a task that the Security Council cannot and must not undertake on its own. The General Assembly must increase its efforts in that matter and guarantee that those efforts are carried out in close coordination with the Security Council, to avoid the duplication of efforts and ensure a more effective organizational approach.

In that context, we must add that the Working Group's practice of meeting with parties affected by their decisions should serve as an example for other subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, a practice that Panama has repeatedly endorsed.

With respect to the report of the Secretary-General, we welcome the important advances in the implementation of the relevant norms, standards and international legislation in the criminal field, including the conviction of members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for recruiting and using children in armed conflict in that country. Along the same lines, the arrest warrants and charges issued by the International Criminal Court against individuals who have forcefully recruited children represent concrete steps taken by the international community to put an end to the culture of impunity that exists among those who systematically violate the rights of children in situations of armed conflict.

Despite those advances, we must express our concern regarding the increasing use of camps for

refugees and internally displaced persons as places from which to recruit child soldiers, a practice which aggravates the daily difficulties already faced by those children. Refugee and internally displaced children are more vulnerable to homelessness, malnutrition, lack of education and discrimination. Such difficult conditions have a psychological impact on children, predisposing them to violent behaviours and facilitating their recruitment by the warring parties in a conflict.

We express our concern regarding the proliferation of intentional and systematic attacks against schools, teachers and school buildings, where children do not only go for their education, but where they traditionally find refuge. That space must be respected. In particular, we stress our concern for the trends in the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and the excessive use of force against children.

We join all those who reaffirmed their support for the work of the International Criminal Court. We encourage that international tribunal to continue safeguarding the rights of children when investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Finally, we underscore the importance of including child protection advisers in the mandates of future peacekeeping missions and relevant political missions. Likewise, we stress the need for greater concentration on the reintegration of children into society through programmatic responses at the community level, particularly in the form of education and psychosocial support, in order to increase their opportunities for participation in society.

I cannot conclude without congratulating the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of UNICEF, and the very many non-governmental organizations, all of them, on the work that they have done to put an end to this threat to international peace and security. Similarly, let me also acknowledge the leadership that France has shown in this extremely important area. I thank them all.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council and give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, let me thank the Security Council presidency, Panama, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. The EU strongly welcomes the new report of the Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) and the recommendations contained therein. We also look forward to the adoption of a meaningful and operation-oriented presidential statement by the Security Council.

The EU attaches great importance to this issue and continues to be a strong supporter of the valuable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We commend Ms. Coomaraswamy and her office for their outstanding work in raising awareness, engaging with parties to conflicts through her field visits and keeping this issue high on the agenda. We extend our full support for this mandate for the future. Further, we wish to compliment all parties engaged on the ground for their indispensable work that contributed to this report.

The report of the Secretary-General reflects both positive and negative developments in the recent past. We welcome the progress made in Colombia and call on the Government to continue to tackle the issue of the use of children by illegal armed groups and root out abuses committed by State actors. We recognize the noteworthy achievements that have taken place in Côte d'Ivoire, the decrease in reports of grave violations of children's rights in some countries and the release of a number of child soldiers. Nevertheless, we are still witnessing continuing factional violence in conflict situations like Somalia and Iraq, escalation of violence in the Middle East, deliberate attacks on schools by the Taliban in Afghanistan and high levels of sexual and gender-based violence in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

We strongly condemn the continuous use of rape as a method of warfare in Darfur. This scourge should be addressed by systematically bringing to justice the perpetrators of this violence. The movement of armed groups along the borders between Sudan and Chad and between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to recruit children continues to be alarming.

The 10-year Graça Machel strategic review notes that the context of conflict over the last decade has changed dramatically. The EU condemns the relatively new phenomenon of using children as human shields or in suicide attacks. We are distressed by the evidence that points to camps for refugees and internally displaced persons as prime recruiting grounds for child soldiers, and by the number of children being detained for alleged association with armed groups in violation of international standards.

The scope of child casualties in armed conflicts in relation to small arms, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions is equally worrying. We welcome the proposal of the Secretary-General to consider concluding a binding instrument on cluster munitions. The EU is committed to concluding such a legally binding instrument that prohibits the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

The EU supports the call from the Secretary-General urging those States that have not done so to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a matter of priority and to sign and ratify the Optional Protocols to it. We also urge States to accelerate the process of ratification and accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The EU welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to refer to the ICC for investigation and prosecution violations against children in armed conflicts that fall within the jurisdiction of the Court. We encourage the Council to implement such a proposal. The EU also stresses the role of national justice institutions and of transitional justice mechanisms in the context of conflict and post-conflict situations in order to end impunity for perpetrators of crimes committed against children.

The EU welcomes and is encouraged by the work already carried out by the monitoring and reporting mechanisms on children and armed conflict established by resolution 1612 (2005). We also welcome the resulting information reported to the Security Council in specific situations and their review by its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We would also compliment the Working Group for the concrete conclusions it has adopted following its review of the reports by the Secretary-General. We encourage the Working Group to continue its good work, invite the Security Council to take into account to the greatest extent possible the conclusions of its Working Group in its consideration of situations of conflict, and urge all the parties concerned to implement those conclusions.

The EU would encourage the Security Council to take appropriate and concrete measures against those parties listed in the annexes of the report, as the Secretary General proposes. Furthermore, we support the call to the Security Council to take appropriate account of all categories of grave violations, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violations, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children.

We welcome the attention paid in its conclusions by the Security Council Working Group to all violations committed against children. Similarly, situations of concern in all parts of the world need to be addressed by the Security Council and the international community as a whole, in order to effectively protect the rights of children in armed conflict. The EU would encourage the Security Council to review the violations that trigger the listing of a party in the annexes attached to the report of the Secretary-General. As a first step, the criteria that trigger the listing of a party might be expanded to include the crime of rape and other grave sexual and gender-based violence against children.

Still in the sphere of monitoring and reporting, the EU reiterates the importance of the inclusion of specific child protection advisers with a clear division of labour, reporting lines and guidance within the United Nations system. Their performance should be enhanced through the review outlined in the lessons learned study.

Additionally, we welcome the Secretary-General's indications of progress in action plans for some parties to conflict situations, such as in Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, Burma/Myanmar and the Sudan as well as Sri Lanka and Uganda. In order to see even more progress in the future, access to all parties involved, including non-State parties, must be guaranteed. Moreover, setting up concrete time-bound action plans and ensuring that the parties involved implement them needs further constant monitoring by the Security Council in all situations that warrant such action plans. Member States too should play a better role in facilitating dialogue with parties involved in armed conflict.

The EU is proceeding with the mainstreaming of children's rights into our advocacy, policies and programmes, and we continue to monitor the situation of children in armed conflicts, particularly through the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. Moreover, the EU advocates a systematic mainstreaming of human rights, gender issues and child protection. That is reflected in the Checklist for Integration of the Protection of Children affected by Armed Conflict into European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) Operations as well as in the Conclusions on Sudan/Chad/Central African Republic, both adopted by the Council of the EU.

Furthermore, we promote a comprehensive approach to the issue. We believe that it is only by addressing the development, humanitarian, security and human rights aspects that we can successfully prevent conflicts and their impact on children. Such a vision is fully reflected in the recently adopted Commission Communication entitled "A Special Place for Children in EU External Action". The issue of children associated with armed conflicts was also included in the 2007 Joint EU-Africa Strategy and Action Plan.

Additionally, a vast range of projects to combat the effects of armed conflict on children are being financed by the European Union. Since 2000, the European Community Humanitarian Office has provided more than €100 million for projects focusing specifically on the needs of children in armed conflicts. Moreover, through the thematic programme Investing in People, the Commission is supporting the project entitled "Prevention and rehabilitation measures addressing children associated with armed forces and groups or involved in the worst forms of child labour in conflict or post-conflict situations", undertaken by the International Labour Organization.

In 2007, EU action focused on concrete strategies and projects to tackle this issue in the 13 priority countries and potential new areas of conflict; on continued support for international efforts and instruments; and on improving United Nations monitoring mechanisms, including early-warning methods. In particular, the EU expressed its support for the development, adoption and implementation of the Paris Commitments and Principles to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups, and invites all stakeholders to make extensive use of those documents in their efforts to address the issue of children and armed conflict.

We must pay special attention to sexual and gender-based violence, girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups and ensure that they are included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Sexual exploitation of children by State and non-State parties remains a widespread atrocity, affecting millions of victims. Such violence is not an inevitable consequence of war, and it needs to be addressed, including through concrete commitments by the parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to prevent such acts and punish the perpetrators.

The EU welcomes the measures that have been adopted to combat sexual exploitation and abuses by peacekeeping personnel. We recognize the importance of the United Nations comprehensive strategy on that issue. The EU also welcomes the Policy Statement and the work carried out on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, a greater focus needs to be placed on the reintegration of children associated with armed groups. The sustainability of DDR programmes can be enhanced by supporting national initiatives focused on recovery following demobilization, by encouraging national ownership of such programmes and by engaging with local communities and civil society organizations, while ensuring that predictable, timely, adequate and long-term international funding is available. The Paris Commitments and Principles enhance the coherence of our efforts to prevent the unlawful recruitment of children and to ensure their sustainable reintegration into families and communities.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that the EU is fully committed and stands ready to continue to work closely with the United Nations system, as well as with national and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in our efforts to relieve the suffering of children in armed conflicts. But, to meet the concerns related to children and armed conflict, we must go beyond holding the perpetrators accountable; we need to respond to the needs of the survivors of such violence.

Let us therefore unite our efforts and build on the progress already made towards a future in which

children will no longer be victims of armed conflict. We strongly encourage the Council to begin discussions on a new draft resolution on children and armed conflict that builds upon the experience gained and lessons learned in the three years since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), taking into consideration the recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General in his report.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

We warmly welcome the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). Widespread and unacceptable patterns of violations against children are recorded. Armed forces and armed groups that recruit and exploit children in armed conflicts are named. Tangible results have also been achieved.

We fully endorse the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report concerning child rights and the role of child protection in future peacekeeping missions. The five Nordic countries support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council give equal weight to all six categories of grave violations set out in resolution 1612 (2005). Nevertheless, we are mindful of the need to expand the efforts of the Working Group, with due regard for existing resources and capabilities. In view of those constraints, it has been suggested that priority be accorded to violations perpetrated with an intent to harm children.

In that regard, one of the most disturbing chapters in the Secretary-General's report concerns sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. Women and girls are the largest and most vulnerable group of victims. Sexual and gender-based violence is not an inevitable consequence of war; it can and must be prevented. In line with the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on children and armed conflict, we support the inclusion of gender-based violence among the violations listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report.

Only rarely are those violating the rights of children successfully prosecuted. We welcome the progress made by the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone in bringing charges against individuals suspected of grave violations of the rights of the child. Nevertheless, increased efforts by national courts are necessary in order to end impunity for those who commit crimes against children. It is in the interest of Governments to cooperate closely with the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism to bring to justice the perpetrators of such crimes, for the sake of reconciliation, sustainable peace and development.

The five Nordic countries, echoing the recommendation of the Secretary-General, encourage the Security Council to refer violations against children in armed conflicts to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution when national Governments persistently fail to prosecute such crimes.

We endorse the Secretary-General's comprehensive recommendation that encourages Member States to conclude a binding instrument prohibiting the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians. Furthermore, we encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue her reporting on that crucial issue.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism has greatly enhanced the Security Council's ability to receive reliable and timely information. Its collaborative nature, embodied in the country-level task forces, also highlights the importance of dialogue among the parties to a conflict, the international community and civil society in furthering the interests of children affected by armed conflict. To enhance the relevance of that approach, the Nordic countries encourage the Security Council to continue to call upon parties in all relevant situations of armed conflict to submit concrete time-bound action plans detailing their efforts to end grave violations against children. We welcome last week's decision by the Government of Colombia to take part in the mechanism.

Furthermore, the Security Council should not shy away from considering effective targeted measures against those who commit grave violations against children. We call on the Working Group to explore the full range of measures to bring persistent perpetrators to book if, for example, they fall dramatically short of

their own action plan objectives or choose to ignore the mechanism altogether.

The close interest paid to this Security Council open debate bears witness to a widely shared confidence in resolution 1612 (2005) and in the mechanisms set up in its wake. The removal of parties to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire from the Secretary-General's watch list is one example of the efficacy of resolution 1612 (2005). Further progress depends on the willingness to build on this and other successes. The Nordic countries encourage the Security Council to ensure that it pays equal attention to children affected by armed conflict whether the specific situations are on its agenda or not.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to the delegation of Panama for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank France for its strong leadership in chairing the Security Council Working Group on this subject. My appreciation goes also to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Ms. Jo Becker for their respective presentations, which have enriched our debate.

We are encouraged by the finding in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) that noticeable progress has been made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established by Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). Important steps have been taken by the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone to end impunity for crimes against children, particularly with regard to the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups.

The Paris Commitments and the Paris Principles, both adopted in February 2007, are two milestone documents in that they reaffirm our commitment to prevent the unlawful recruitment of children and provide model guidelines for protecting children from being forcibly associated with armed groups.

The 10-year strategic review of the Graça Machel report (A/51/306), convened jointly by Ms. Coomaraswamy and UNICEF, offered an excellent opportunity to examine issues related to children and armed conflict.

Japan supports the full implementation of Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict, particularly resolution 1612 (2005), as well as of the monitoring and reporting system. We welcome the information that has been properly collected through the mechanisms on the violations being committed against children.

The recommendations made by the Working Group have contributed significantly to efforts to remedy such situations. It is an encouraging achievement that Côte d'Ivoire has been removed from the annex of the report since four militia groups have implemented action plans to cease the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Certainly, progress has been made with respect to protection. However, the overall situation of children affected by armed conflict in the world remains very grave. Today, the use of over 250,000 child soldiers, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation and abductions still continue. It is essential that the international community continue to support the monitoring and reporting mechanism and extend cooperation to United Nations activities, such as the deployment of child protection advisers, as appropriate, to other peacekeeping missions and political missions, as has been done in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

Japan believes it is indispensable for the Security Council and the Working Group to give equal attention to children in armed conflict in all situations of concern and to give equal weight to all six categories of grave violations.

Children are the ones who are most vulnerable when conflict breaks out. The concept of human security, focusing on the safety and security of individuals, provides a vitally important perspective for the protection and empowerment of children affected by conflict. A comprehensive and integrated approach based on such a concept is highly relevant to the entire process of protecting and empowering children who are caught in armed conflict. It must start with the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers and must include their release, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration into normal social life.

Japan, as an initiator of the Friends of Human Security in New York, will work with other interested countries to operationalize the human security approach in all the policies and programmes of the United Nations system in tackling this problem. Ensuring the protection and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict is an important challenge in successful post-conflict peacebuilding efforts as well.

The promotion of human security through the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the consolidation of peace will be one of three priorities for the coming Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), which will be held in Yokohama in May of this year. Japan has paid high attention to the plight of child soldiers in supporting peacebuilding efforts and has extended assistance to programmes to provide support to former child soldiers in many countries, including Liberia and the countries of the Great Lakes region, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

In closing, I would like to reiterate Japan's commitment to realizing a world where children are free from conflict. We will continue to cooperate closely with other interested partners to advance the protection and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict and to allow them to realize their many dreams, as they are supposed to.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico welcomes the convening of this debate and thanks the Secretary-General for his annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757), which was presented in January by his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and which the Council is considering today.

This comprehensive and detailed report fully sets out the progress achieved in the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). It analyses the status of implementation of measures to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. It refers to the progress made in the application of the monitoring mechanism and the submission of reports and provides information about the inclusion of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

My delegation wishes to highlight the determination to bring about the submission of this report, which was the result of considerable consultation, and which emphasizes the humanitarian dimension of this issue and focuses on the need to provide broad and effective protection for children endangered and affected by armed conflicts.

In this context, we also welcome the work of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and emphasize how important it is that the Security Council enable the group to recommend the imposition of selective measures against parties to armed conflict that commit serious violations against children.

This wide-ranging report allows us to stress that even though progress has been noted in certain countries, every year children suffer more as a result of armed conflict, in the light of the changing nature of the conflicts and wars that take place throughout the world. Over the past two decades, more than 2 million children have died in conflict zones; another 6 million have been left permanently handicapped; more than a quarter of a million of young people have been exploited as child soldiers in at least 30 countries; and thousands of girls have been victims of sexual exploitation, rape and prostitution. There is no region in the world immune to this trend.

In this context, Mexico shares the concerns expressed in the report of the Secretary-General, such as those relating to the ongoing recruitment of children in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons; sexual and gender-based violence against children; the detention of children presumed to be associated with armed groups; the increase in the number of systematic and deliberate attacks against students, teachers and schools; and the ongoing impunity of those who commit crimes against children, particularly the recruitment and use of children by Governmental forces or armed groups. My delegation also agrees that it is important that peacebuilding operations take into account the need to protect and reintegrate children into society. Long-term rehabilitation and development programmes linked to disarmament and demobilization must help to reintegrate those children successfully and sustainably.

Given the gravity of the situation, it is important that the Security Council pay the same attention and act with equal zeal with regard to all categories of

violation of the rights of children in armed conflict — those relating not only to the recruitment and use of child soldiers, but also to the killing and mutilation of children; rape and other serious sexual crimes; kidnappings and attacks on schools and hospitals; and the denial of access to humanitarian assistance for children, as noted in the 10-year strategic review of the Graça Machel report.

It is also important for the Security Council to adopt selective and effective sanctions against persistent offenders who continue systematically to commit serious crimes against children during armed conflicts, flouting the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the resolutions of the Council.

We also feel that peacekeeping missions and special political missions play a very important role in that process. We therefore believe it appropriate for child protection advisors to be present in such missions with a view to strengthening monitoring and responding rapidly in situations that affect children in armed conflict. My delegation also supports on-site visits by the Special Representative to obtain first-hand information of the situation on the ground.

In armed conflicts, children are the principal victims; they are the targets of those conflicts and have increasingly become their instruments. By definition, children are innocent, especially vulnerable, and the least responsible for conflicts, and yet, as we well know, they suffer disproportionately from the excesses of war. Children also represent the present and the future of our society. If we destroy them, we are also destroying our possibility of living together.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In view of the lateness of the hour and the other speakers remaining on the list, I propose, with the agreement of the Council, that we suspend the meeting and resume this afternoon.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.